

# The Irish People

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SPECIAL MAYDAY EDITION

## MAYDAY

There are 115,536 people unemployed in the south and 2,800 on short time. 50,000 are out of work in the North, the highest figure since 1940. 34,200 new jobs will be needed EVERY year in order to achieve full employment within the next ten years. Michael Killeen, managing director of the Industrial Development Authority, says that they will have difficulty in meeting their current job target of 17,000 new jobs in 1976. Each new job created costs the State £3,300 in direct grants alone. Between 1970 and 1974 the IDA spent £225 million. The net number of new industrial jobs created was 5,000.

### Northern workers want a better life

"May Day is the traditional occasion for trade unionists throughout the world to join in remembrance of all those in the past who struggled against bitter conditions to build the foundations of the trade union movement."

May Day also provides us with the opportunity to celebrate past achievements and to indicate support for all those who seek and are working towards a better life for their fellow men.

Regrettably, on the occasion of May Day 1972, the conditions of workers in many countries of the world leaves little grounds for celebration. We in Northern Ireland, with sadness, must record the continuing violence and community unrest as well as a steep increase in unemployment and a lowering of living standards.

Tragically, we are in a situation in which we have experienced the murder and maiming of thousands of workers with the consequential terrible toll of human suffering, misery and distress.

It is appropriate at this time that all those who accept the primary principle of trade union unity and brotherhood should dedicate themselves to the establishment of a society in which peace may be nurtured and prevail.

That is how the Northern Ireland trade unions, in their paper, T.U. News, mark May Day. Where workers in other parts of the world may face recession and unemployment, the plight of Northern workers is far worse. For, allied to the economic disasters of the past few years they must face the twin dangers of sectarian and paramilitary violence and the excesses of British troops. Not only livelihoods are lost in the North but workers' lives. In the face of this for tat sectarian murders the May Day message of worker unity seems a little remote but all the more imperative for that.

Northern workers are looking for a better life, one free from violence, intimidation, sectarianism, unemployment, one in which all enjoy equality of education, of job opportunity, decent housing, adequate social welfare benefits where applicable. To ask for a better life in the North is to ask for a little and an awful lot.

It takes very little to improve on the existing conditions; with 10 per cent of the

population unemployed and 40 per cent living in substandard housing things could hardly get much worse. To ask for something better than this is a small request.

But a 'better life for all', by its very name, implies a more radical change in Northern life—the abandonment of religious labels of 'Protestant' worker and 'Catholic' worker in the common interests of all. With sectarianism eliminated in the North the divisions between worker and worker, which prop up the other inequalities, could be knocked away. The working population with a new unity of outlook and purpose, would be better able to achieve its demands.

After a long period in which it lay low, the Northern Ireland trade unions have at last moved to the forefront by their initiation of the 'Better Life for All Campaign'. The aims of the Campaign are: the right to live free from violence, sectarianism, intimidation and discrimination; the right to security of employment and well paid work; the right to associate freely and to advocate change by peaceful means; the right to good housing accommodation; the right to equality of educational opportunity; the right to adequate social services to protect the well being and living standards of the aged, the young, the sick, the unemployed and the socially deprived.

The campaign has the support of political parties and working class organisations in Ireland and throughout the world. But it is the support of every Northern worker, in their own home and workplace, that will count. It will also decide the future shape of Northern Ireland and whether, at some future May Day, there really is a better life for all.



• The dole queue is the symbol of our times.

### LEFT ALTERNATIVE

IRELAND has come to the crossroads. The country is in a state of crisis—a crisis which brings serious psychological, emotional and economic problems to the homes of at least 115,000 people, if not more. The road diverges ahead of us. To the right there is the path of private enterprise, profit maximisation as the motive for business, employment an afterthought to this, vital wealth-making resources in the hands of private individuals or companies to exploit them as they will and the continuation of the unplanned but heavily state-subsidised system of private enterprise which has been the norm since the Irish state was founded.

In the opposite direction there lies an alternative—THE LEFT ALTERNATIVE. That is the approach which says that private enterprise has failed to provide the jobs and the livelihoods to which every citizen is entitled, has left the country economically and technologically backward in all the years of its existence and in later years has abandoned even this defective role to foreign owned multi-nationally controlled business.

The alternative that is offered is that of state enterprise, based on the existing State companies. This approach would return the mineral, oil and gas resources to the control of the state, as provided for in the Constitution, to be developed in the national in-

terest, would bring the banking system with its investment resources also under state control, with a policy of investment in the creation of a sound industrial base, geared to the country's resources.

Jobs-livelihoods—the where-withal to eat and live comfortably—this is the great issue facing this country at present. North and South. This is the National Question. Whoever can deliver the goods, that is, whoever can manage the economy efficiently to the greatest benefit of the greatest number and in so doing provide all who need it with the means to live, that group can claim the right to govern. Their mandate will be the wish of hundreds of thousands of people to return to work.

Whatever policy can provide the jobs, the industry and the future economic development, that is the policy which must prevail, for the sake of the vast majority of the people.

The Left Alternative group, composed of the Irish Communist Party, the Left Liaison of the Labour party and Sinn Féin, has put forward its proposals to solve the economic crisis.

The 1973-77 job target is 55,000 new jobs. Professor Brendan Walsh estimated in his "Population and Employment Projections" that between 375,000 and 420,000 new jobs are needed by 1986, to reduce unemployment to 4 per cent. The IDA's target is only half of that and it recently warned that it would have difficulty in meeting even it's 1976 job target of 17,000 new jobs.

Instead of state money going to prop up the private sector, to the detriment of its own activities and with very little jobs to show even for that, the Left Alternative groups want the existing state sector to become the focus for expansion and development, in order to create employment. This would be achieved by, firstly, the development of the state companies and their expansion into profit-making ventures, in particular the exploitation and development of our oil, gas and minerals, the creation of a socially controlled building industry and the taking into public ownership of the banks.

The actual structures through which the Left Alternative proposals would be implemented would be that of a National Development Corporation with various sub-divisions to organise the development of oil and gas, reorganise existing industries, direct state trading and manufacturing, attract foreign investment and manage industrial and commercial investment, in conjunction with the publicly-owned banking system.

It is no coincidence that within weeks of unveiling the Left Alternative programme the present Coalition Minister, Patrick Cooney, started to talk of 'reds under the beds' as a substitute for answering these proposals with the economic and employment policies which the Coalition has never developed.



## The Irish People

### MAY DAY

For the first time the Irish People has been produced with a special emphasis on May Day. This is the international Day of Labour, a time of unity and mutual support among working people the world over. It is a time when the cause of Labour, the problems and issues which most affect working people, are given prominence.

The Irish People took this opportunity to take stock of what is happening in Ireland. As everyone knows, unemployment is the major national problem. In this issue we show how a number of different organisations are tackling the problem, North and South; the Left Alternative group, the Northern Ireland Committee of CTU, the Committee of Public Sector workers and so on. We have given some attention also to the question of our oil and gas wealth, which should hold out promise of many extra jobs but which doesn't. And we show how one organisation is attempting to take the casualties of this situation, the unemployed, and mould them into a force which can exert pressure on the Government to create more jobs.

One further suggestion for May Day. The Government recently announced that St. Patrick's Day, rather than Easter, would be the national day of celebration in future, to avoid offence to people in Northern Ireland. Would it not be a far better idea to make May Day the major national holiday of the year and to focus on the cause of Labour, rather than a semi-mythical saint?

Mr. O'Leary refused in the past to make May Day a national holiday. Ireland falls far short of the rest of the E.E.C. in the number of public holidays it enjoys. More immediately, May Day has been designated such a holiday in the North and this will come into effect soon. The Government could make common cause with the Northern part of the country and give workers North and South a common platform by taking this one small step.

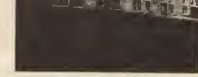
## OIL AND GAS

Elsewhere in this issue we deal with the Report of the Working Party set up to study the manpower implications of our oil and gas reserves. We devoted our attention in the article mainly to the question of oil-related employment.

But there is another aspect which deserves prominence. According to the Working Party the bulk of offshore surveying, drilling and pipe-laying is done by international specialists who offer their skills on a contract basis to the highest bidder. In other words, the highly skilled, technical work is not done by the oil licensee at all.

Calls for State control and development of our offshore wealth were often rebuffed by the argument that Ireland lacked the skills and technology to do this on our own and hence our need to bring in foreign oil companies. Now it is clear that the Government could buy this expertise on the open market like any other bidder. It is still not too late to do this and to take effective control of our oil and gas fields in the national interest.

## Contractors clean up on Belfast 'Lump' sites



Flats at Moyard, Belfast.

Pseudo-co-operatives, many of them run by ex-internees, are causing an upsurge of the 'lump' in the Belfast building industry and making thousands of pounds profit for the main contractors in the process. But while the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is being 'ripped off' for contract money to repair and refurbish vandalised dwellings the lumpers are producing shoddy work which will eventually have to be made good by the tenant. Northern trade unionists are seriously concerned at the re-appearance of the lumpers in such strength. For many of them, their background in paramilitary organisations or the prison camp has made them impervious to normal trade union arguments. They are a law unto themselves on the Northern building sites and are seriously weakening the strength of trade unions in this area of the building industry.

Two of the main blackspots in Belfast at present are estates of flats at Moyard and New Barnsley where the lump is rife.

Here, as elsewhere, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive awards the contract to repair the flats to the main contractor. In the case of Moyard/New Barnsley the contractor is O'Neill builders. Having been awarded the contract for the job, at a fee of £5,000 per flat, O'Neill proceeded to sub-contract the work. There is rarely more than half a dozen in each group of lumpers, often less. Many of them have formed themselves into small 'co-operatives', in a strange manifestation of the Provisional's 'Eire Nua' ethic of co-operative work. Indeed the Provisionals themselves are directly engaged in lumping through their Eire Nua building co-operative which is part of the chain of co-operatives known as Andersonstown Co-operatives.

While O'Neill receives £5,000 per flat, the subbies are paid no more than £5,000, leaving the main contractor with a clear £3,000 profit for doing absolutely nothing. The sub-contractors do the entire job from plastering to plumbing. The main contractor has an additional perk in cases where, like O'Neill, he is also a building supplier. Having paid the lumpers to do the job, he then stipulates that they buy the materials off him, as the supplier. So, having held back £3,000 of the contract price, he gets another cut from the sale of materials. This can even leave a loophole to avoid tax payments, if a contractor is clever enough.

The growth of the 'lumpers' has brought the building industry back to a state almost like the old 'hiring' criticised the fact that these sort of talks had not been officially organised as part of their visit. Natural dislike of the Trotskyist Troops Out Movement among British trade union circles has combined with the current Better Life for All campaign of the Northern Ireland unions to further erode their support.

## 'Troops Out' visit not on

The 'Troops Out Movement', which sponsors speakers like Bernadette McAlliskey in Britain and adopts a sometimes sympathetic stand to the Provisionals' campaign, has shelved plans for a 'mass labour movement delegation' to Ireland. The delegation was to have visited Belfast and Dublin from 28 May to 1 June to 'establish the facts of the situation in Ireland thereby enabling the British Labour movement to develop an informed and progressive policy in support of the Irish people's long struggle for self-determination'.

The latest word is that the delegation has been postponed until mid-September to avoid clashing with trade union conferences planned for May-June. Another reason why the visit has been postponed may be because the 'Troops Out Movement' is not over-welcome in some circles.

Troops Out Movement members, who took part in a similar trade union delegation to the North around this time last year, created much ill-feeling when they broke away from the main body of the delegation to have talks with Andersonstown Provisionals and issued a separate statement

system. The lumpers are hired for one specific job; if there is no further use for them, they are let go. While one might not feel too much sympathy for lumpers this weakens the position of all unionised building workers.

Job demarcations are broken down, there is no social welfare coverage, no job security. What's more, the lumpers are contriving to make work more dangerous for everyone. A new register of safety regulations was recently negotiated between the Housing Executive and UCATT. This was regarded as a major advance in working conditions but now its enforcement has been put in jeopardy by the lack of a trade union structure on individual sites.

While the contractors are cleaning up on this system and the lumpers are profiting in the short term as well, the future tenants are going to have massive repair bills on their hands, to make good the shoddy work which untrained lumpers are turning out. Under Housing Executive regulations the tenant is responsible for internal repairs to the dwellings.

Caught in the middle are the architects of the Housing Executive. Their job is to inspect work to see if it reaches minimum standards laid down by the Royal Institute of British Architects, before passing it for the Executive. However, there is evidence that the Executive is putting pressure on its own architects to pass substandard, lumpy work in order to keep the house-building programme moving. One architect in Derry, who turned down a particular piece of work, was sacked and only reinstated after vigorous protests from his union, the Public Service Alliance. With a proper system of unionisation and support labour employed by the Housing Executive it would be in everyone's interest to see that proper standards are maintained.

Failing that, the main contractors are cleaning up on what is a jerry-building racket. The tenants suffer, the Housing Executive suffers, in time even the lumpers will suffer from their lack of job security and social welfare coverage. And the trade unions, which have worked for years to improve conditions for their members on the building sites, will be left to clean up the mess.

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## Women sacked

Anyone who had thought that either the O'Leary Equal Pay Act or the EEC's intervention had guaranteed the right to equal pay can think again. In a manner reminiscent of the days of William Martin Murphy fifty women, employed by four TV rental companies in Dublin, were sacked when they sought equality of pay and conditions with male engineers in the firms.

The women are seeking every second Saturday off and an allowance for Saturdays worked, conditions which are already enjoyed by their male counterparts. The claim was submitted by the AUEW over a year ago but nothing came of it, so the women took action of their own. They refused to turn up for the mandatory Saturday work at Irish TV Rentals for several weeks and Saturday fortnight the women in the three other firms, RTV Rentals, Irish Vision and Murphy Vision, followed suit.

They were all sacked. The AUEW has declared the strike official and are looking for Congress backing. At present the situation is fluid with some members of the ITGWU and the IUDW still at work. Incidentally it is interesting to note that the women's claim is being pursued under the 1975 National Pay Agreement's anomaly clause. According to Brian Anderson, Divisional Organiser of the AUEW, this is more useful to women workers than Mr. O'Leary's equal pay legislation.

## A seat at the table

Anyone following the fortunes of Goulding Chemicals will know that the workers there had been engaged, for several weeks, in picketing a ship in Cork which was carrying 5,000 tons of DAP fertiliser, in order to prevent it from being imported. The fertiliser would be the thin end of the wedge in replacing home manufactured fertilisers with the imported article, they believed, and later, it was decided that no fertiliser imports of any kind would be allowed into the country in future.

This decision was strongly backed by the ITGWU and a National Committee, representing all the fertiliser factories in the country, is in the process of being formed. It would seem all the more contradictory, therefore, that the Goulding workers should subsequently agree, as they did on 9 April, to allow the DAP cargo be unloaded. But in fact this is not the defeat that it might seem on the surface. In return for the unhindered unloading of the DAP cargo, the Goulding workers have won the right to be present at negotiations on the take-over of the company by the American Agricco company.

This is a significant advantage which the Goulding men would not otherwise have enjoyed and it gives them a very real voice to protect their interests at the conference table. In addition the company has guaranteed permanent employment up to the end of July with national talks at least four weeks in advance of any proposed change in permanent employment.

The decision to sell it's holding to Agricco, is a sign of the poor state of Tony O'Reilly's Fitzwillton empire. In it's infancy Gouldings was the strongest part of the combine and undoubtedly helped Fitzwillton to build up it's later acquisitions. But with the slump in the fertiliser market it became a heavy financial drain which Fitzwillton was not prepared to carry.

Indeed the history of Goulding makes a mockery of Tony O'Reilly's publicly declared intention to bring investment funds into Ireland to develop Irish industry and improve Irish management expertise.

THE IRISH SOCIALIST  
On sale every month  
available from New Books  
Parliament St., Dublin 2.



# The Wage Agreement— can we break the circle?

In spite of all the shadow boxing, by government ministers, employer representatives and the more ominous E.E.C. intervention, proposals for another National Wage Agreement have emerged from the Employer Labour conference. Once again workers will be asked to endorse the agreement by the I.C.T.U. and a further agreement to last thirteen and a half months is likely to be accepted.

We may well ask why such an agreement would be accepted by so many trade unionists when the money terms are unlikely to compensate for the real rises in the cost of living either during the previous agreement or the currency of the proposed one. Many sections of the trade union movement are likely to express opposition to a further agreement and the usual demands for a return to a free-for-all will be raised. This appeal will have a particular attraction for craft workers and industrial groups with strong bargaining power yet the majority of workers are unlikely to opt for such a course, in the present economic circumstances.

A lesson which has been hard learned by the trade union movement in the free enterprise system is that advances in living standards are not generally achieved during periods of economic depression when bargaining power is weakened by high unemployment. Because inflation hits the weakest sections hardest the general response is therefore one of protecting existing wages, conditions and jobs. This proposed agreement will be recommended by Congress for those reasons. However, this is a poor substitute for a real national defence of living standards which can only be guaranteed if we have planned economic growth.

This proposed agreement which is another form of wage restraint will not protect living standards or make any serious contribution to improving job prospects. Wage bargaining of this limited type, whether conducted at national, industrial or local level, offers no solution for the real economic problems of the working class. Reliance upon money increases alone when the value of that money is constantly being eroded is an inadequate response even to cost of living rises. It's also an avoidance of the real issues which cause the problem.

The details of the agreement will not contain any references to how money saved from this form of pay restraint will be spent, what will happen to the excessive profits of the banks made during previous agreements, what the prospects for a state smelter or an oil refinery are or how much capital will private enterprise provide for job creation. Even the half hearted attempts at price control by the prices commission, already sacrificed in the interest of private profit margins, will be ignored this time, since the free-for-all market economy must be preserved at all costs.

This poses a serious challenge for the trade union Left. Will they offer an alternative which can lead the movement forward into bargaining about causes and not simply the effects of the system? Attempts to turn the clock back by a return to a bargaining system which relies upon spontaneous wage militancy, inter-union rivalry, re-establishing traditional differentials, futile and often unnecessary strikes, will not succeed. Central versus local bargaining is not the issue.

**WHAT YOU ARE BARGAINING ABOUT IS REALLY THE QUESTION NOW.**

But most of all it should be giving all-out support to those workers who decide to fight for their jobs. The victory of just one group of workers in defending their jobs would be the best possible incentive to other workers threatened with redundancies to fight for their jobs, the Committee believes. They take the case of Rank as an example. The company made £2m profit last year and expects to make another £2m this year. Yet, at least one hundred workers are to lose their jobs at the Limerick factory.

On their second demand, that unions set about organising the unemployed and cater more for their own unemployed members, they explain that the Government and employers are making full use of the division among workers between the employed and the unemployed. Employers attack workers' wages and living conditions and when there are protests they reply that if 'you don't accept the terms offered then there are plenty more on the dole queue who will'. The Government itself is using the dole queue as a lever to force workers to accept wage restraint.

It is good to see our fellow unemployed organising and analysing the situation as it is. Where other parts of the world are planning and developing large scale industry and agriculture, opening up mineral resources, building reservoirs to water the deserts, those of us in Ireland who are unfortunate enough to be made redundant are being driven into even more primitive circumstances through the outdated workings of our social welfare system.

It is time that the trade union movement sat up and took notice of what is happening to our workforce in and around those black-holes which are called Labour Exchanges.

## Newtown- abbey

The pressure of recession, redundancy and economic crisis has brought Newtownabbey District Council into the campaign for a Better Life for All, organised by the Northern Ireland trade union movement. The first local body of its kind to express support for the aims of the campaign, Newtownabbey Council area is suffering badly from the economic recession and faces even higher unemployment with the decision of STC to close its Monkstown factory.

## Farming people

# RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF THE VETS DISPUTE

● Because this is our special May Day edition we have changed our farming article from its usual position on Page 4.

The issue of taxation is still one of the most emotive in Irish farming. We have already commented about the storm blown up around the issue of co-op taxation. Last weekend, Bishop Casey of Kerry added the weight of his crozier to the debate. The IFA are also trying hard to make the most of the issue. Last week they held a meeting in Kerry to discuss it and this week Paddy Lane addresses a meeting of co-operative members in Donegal, on the same issue. This meeting was announced with three-quarter page advertisements in the Donegal papers. The IFA never had much of an organisation in Donegal but Paddy seems to feel that this campaign can help them get one off the ground.

During the cattle crisis 1974 the IFA held a meeting in Letterkenny. Several hundred local farmers crowded into the hall to hear some initiative on the crisis. They were disappointed. The IFA speakers went on about taxation! Only a very small percentage of the farmers present would have been in the tax bracket. The meeting ended with promises of greater involvement by the IFA in Donegal. However, it was late 1975 before the IFA appointed a full-time man for Donegal. This is their first spurt of activity since then.

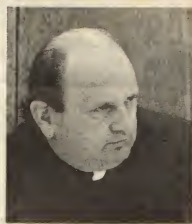
One wonders whether this tax bandwagon will be any more successful than the last one on which the IFA jumped.

● ● ●  
The Vets' dispute has dragged on for so long now that many people have given up reading the snippets that appear about it in the newspapers. Today the end seems to be as far away as it was when the dispute first began. The most contentious issue at stake is the employment of lay testers by the Department of Agriculture to do the blood sampling work carried out up to now by the vets. The vets claim that there would be a drop in their income and this is one of the reasons for the introduction of the lay testers; to save money on the disease eradication scheme. The vets, therefore, have been refusing to take part in the disease eradication scheme as a result.

The farm organisations have involved themselves in the dispute, with T. J. Maher and Jimmy O'Keefe offering themselves as intermediaries. As a result of their

The objectives of the Better Life for All campaign are the right to secure and well-paid work, to freedom from violence, intimidation and discrimination, to free association and, peaceful political expression, to good housing, equal educational opportunity and adequate social services. While sectarianism and violence is a major concern of the campaign, especially in areas where sectarian murders have taken place, the problem of unemployment is endemic throughout the North and at 11 per cent is the highest level in Europe. Newtownabbey is feeling the pinch more so than most and the local Better Life Campaign Committee acknowledged this fact when it named its first priority as saving the jobs in the STC factory. It appealed to the workers there to fight the redundancies and not be bought off by redundancy payments and called for the fullest participation from local representatives, including the District Council, in this.

If the STC closure goes ahead, its effect on the community will be dire. It is the largest employer in the area and many more depend indirectly upon it for a livelihood. According to the Chairman of the Newtownabbey Better Life Campaign Committee, for every job in the factory at least four or five others are dependent on that job for their existence. The Better Life for All Campaign has already called for the Government take-over of STC, and the entire Northern telecommunications industry, as a matter of priority.



Bishop Casey: turning his crozier on co-op taxes.

Intervention the ICMSA has taken a firm stand against the vets and the IFA have taken a slightly less definite stand against them. Jimmy O'Keefe went so far as to declare at the AGM of the ICMSA that the Department, the IFA and the ICMSA should meet together to solve the dispute and leave the vets out of it, if necessary.

The Farmers' Defence Association is the only farm organisation which has taken a firm stand on the side of the vets. Their National Executive issued a statement supporting the vets. A member of their Executive told me that they recognised the Irish Veterinary Union "as a trade union affiliated to the ICTU. They also felt that only the best qualified people should be taking part in testing of this sort."

However, many people feel that this dispute is simply caused by greed on the part of the vets, in demanding that all the money for the testing go to them. An IVU spokesman, however, told me that this was not true. He also claimed that there was a great shortage of veterinary work in this country. The newly-graduating vet emerging from College each year has a very difficult job in securing employment. Many of them do not succeed. The IVU feels that while there is unemployment among vets they cannot agree to the Minister's proposals to phase them out of blood-testing.

Certainly Mr. Paddy O'Keefe, of the Farmers' Journal, who is chairman of An Foras Taluntais, leaves his readers in no doubt as to where he stands. In an editorial he explains that "The Government cannot be weak on this issue. There are too many other trade union groups with a similar lack of community appreciation for the Government to acquiesce".

## 'Work not Dole' march

The Dublin Council of Trade Unions has decided to organise a protest march over unemployment to take place in late May. The decision was taken on a resolution which was proposed in view of the recent publication of the unemployment figures, now standing at 11.5 per cent, the highest level in the history of the State. This Council resolves to take steps to organise a "Work, not Dole" march and a mass lobby of the Dail as soon as possible to highlight this crisis and to impress on the Government that we, as trade unionists, will not accept this situation".

One of the demands which the Council will be making at its lobby will be the granting of planning permission for an oil refinery at Dublin. The Council declared itself in favour of the refinery when the controversy over planning permission arose and there was criticism at the last meeting of the action of some Labour Party members. "Opportunistic politicians", who were pressuring Mr. Tully to refuse permission for the refinery. The Trades Council lobby will also be pressing for Government intervention in the Government's policy on State ownership and development of our oil, gas and mineral resources.

## Limerick wants right to work

BY OUR MAN  
AT HATCH NO 5

This week we bring you another article from Our Man at Hatch No. 5, in which he writes of news and views around the Labour exchanges. Here he reports on developments on the unemployment front in Limerick.

In these hard times of redundancies it is good to see our unemployed organising to protect their interests. Our brothers and sisters in Limerick have got off to a good start, having formed a Committee for the Right to Work. They are demanding that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions take a fighting stand against redundancies as the first step in fighting unemployment and that it instruct all affiliated unions to set about organising the unemployed and to make adequate provision at branch and national level to cater for their unemployed members.

They point out the necessity to devise a realistic policy for fighting unemployment and to present this to the workers from Golden Vale, S.P.S., Callina, Limerick Clothing Factory, Danus, Clover Meats, the building industry and the many others who queue at the Limerick Labour Exchange.

Workers' leaders have no strategy of fighting to save jobs, they point out. Such a strategy should include preparing workers to defend their jobs, they maintain. This would involve exposing as an illusion the popular notion that unemployment is not really all that bad. It would mean pointing out the demoralising and humiliating aspects of unemployment. Most workers are under the impression that with pay-related, their income will not drop and some even believe that it will rise. The Limerick Right to Work Committee believes that the trade union leadership should be busy dispelling this impression and pointing out that pay-related benefits will, in the vast majority of cases, run out before the worker gets another job.



# OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS BOOM A DAMP SQUIB FOR IRISH WORKERS



BY 1979 there will be work for 1150 people on the oil rigs drilling off the Irish coast. If Irish workers are lucky they may get to fill just 140 of those. The boom in offshore oil and gas has proved a damp squib for the majority of Irish workers who, if they get jobs connected with the oil industry at all, will be employed mainly in the area of minor on-shore services, catering and unskilled labour. That the undoubted wealth which will be gained from our oil resources will never see the inside of an Irish worker's pocket is a direct result of the Government's policy since the existence of oil and gas was first hinted at.

In 1960 the Government handed over the exclusive oil rights to one company, Ambassador, (later to be replaced by Marathon) for the princely sum of £500. Although it later recovered some of the drilling rights from that sole company these are now being disposed of in the same open-handed manner.

Mr. Keating even denied that there was very much oil to give away. "People who think we have made a large commercial discovery of oil on the Irish continental shelf are either misleading themselves or being misled" he said. "Our area is interesting but we have not proven commercial oil and by that I mean of a volume that is commercial."

When wealth was proven to exist and the first spin-off was the natural gas deposit off the South coast the Government gave the contract for the installation of a natural gas grid to the British Gas Corporation rather than to its own energy corporation, the ESB.

When Marathon placed orders for two steel platforms the Government made no attempt to retain that work in the country. It was argued that the skills to construct a steel platform were not available here. Yet in Belfast the massive Harland and Wolff shipyard, with decades of experience in handling steel, was ignored. Massive redundancies now face the yard.

Since the 1960's the Government has acted as if the oil and gas wealth did not exist and later as if it was not really that important. Perhaps that was because there were only three civil servants put to work on formulating our oil policy where in Britain there were 650. Whatever the cause the Government's policy is now coming home to roost.

According to the Report of the Working Party on Manpower and Training Implications of Offshore Oil

and Gas Developments "employment opportunities for Irish persons will arise mainly through replacement of workers who leave employment on the rigs while they are operating off the Irish coast. These opportunities are most likely to occur initially in the lower skill categories. Whatever bonanza there will be in employment and profits it will firstly to foreign contractors and their own workforce. Irish workers either take up the slack or operate at the tail-end of the industry providing warehouses, storage, laundry, food and other ancillary services.

Significantly enough the two major sources of 'downstream' employment which the Report details are in state industries; that of construction and manning of the NET plant at Marina and the ESB port station at Whitegate. Elsewhere in the Report, and obviously within Department of Industry and Commerce, the only role which the state sector is expected to play will be to train the workforce (AnCO), undertake research (IIRS), recruit labour (National Manpower Serv) and generally provide back-up services for the private businesses which will control and profit from the offshore wealth.

Malachy McGurran, Chairman of the Northern Republican Clubs, laid claim to share in the offshore wealth on behalf of Northern workers last February following the announcement of a commercial oil field off the South Cork coast.

"Before Mr. Keating goes any further in his plans to hand this vast wealth to American banks and oil companies he must be made realise that as far as we in the North are concerned it's our oil too", he said.

He suggested the calling of a three-part summit conference on the development of Ireland's oil, between the Department of Industry and Commerce, Mr. Stanley Orme and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. This would formulate a dynamic policy to exploit the mineral, oil and gas potential in the interests of Irish workers.



● Malachy McGurran

## BOYCOTT THREAT FOR SCHERING OBJECTORS

'professional objectors' intent on protecting land or interests in an area in preference to local jobs. Although harping on the fear of pollution the objectors are known to have other motives for keeping Killaloe free of industry. One objector is even reported to have complained that with industry in the area it's impossible to get labour to work his land and those that expect 'ridiculous' wages.

## Now State workers answer the critics—Expand, they say

When an animal is cornered it becomes vicious. It snarls and lashes out at its opponent.

If one wished to liken private enterprise in Ireland to some manner of beast, then it could be said to be trapped by the economic crisis. Hemmed in by rocketing unemployment, loss of business and out-of-control inflation what does it do? It rounds on the state sector, berates it as parasitic and attempts to take any form of profit-making enterprise out of its control. This battle between the rival systems of private or public enterprise has the most serious implications for ordinary working people. The outcome

may decide whether they have a job in the future.

The opening shots in the campaign against the public sector were fired, not by a private businessman, but by a public representative, none other than the Minister for Finance, Richie Ryan. In a speech several months ago he labelled public workers as 'passengers' and claimed that every worker in the state sector was being "carried" by five private sector workers. An image of pampered bureaucrats was conjured up.

It was a useful exercise. It was to be trotted out again, when the Government was trying to enforce a

wage freeze. Public sector workers became the scapegoat for the private sector's inability to pay its employees an adequate wage. It was suggested that in some way if public workers were not paid so much, private workers would get more. How this would be achieved was not made clear.

Now the public sector workers have started to fight back. A Committee for the Development and Expansion of the Public Sector (CDEPS) has been formed, drawn from employees in the Civil Service, State Companies and Local Authorities, and its first pamphlet, "Public Servants for the Public Sector" has been produced.

The Committee outlined three specific aims: to develop a distinct philosophy of public service to replace the anaemic and deferential approach to the private sector by the Department of Finance; to promote the further expansion of State Companies, such as the ESB, Bord na Mona and the Irish Sugar; to promote the direct intervention by Local Authorities in planning the regional infra-structure for economic growth by replacing its servicing function with an aggressive direct deployment of capital and labour.

"Among the 'passengers' mentioned by Ryan are nurses, vocational teachers, welfare officers, firemen and those whose job it is to prevent cruelty to children" the area. Sometimes far outside it, one lives in Cork, one in Waterford and two live as far away as Louth.

These are the ones whom Senator Michael Ferris has stigmatised as that!



The Committee of the Unemployed Workers' Association (L. to R.): Des Hughes, Steve Mooney, Jack Clarke and Brian Tracey.

## New group starts to organise workless

EVERYONE THAT IS ABLE IS ENTITLED TO WORK.

So believes the relatively new Unemployed Workers' Association. In the face of 116,000 people who are able—who are entitled to work—but who have no work, it is a forlorn belief.

To organise that number of people into an effective force demanding measures to provide employment seems a daunting task but the organisers of the UWA have taken it on, nevertheless.

Why? One speaker at a UWA meeting at Gardiner, St. Labour Exchange put it simply. "When children grow up we want something better for them than to come down here once a week and sign on. We can either hand our Labour Cards on to our children or organise for work", he said.

The Unemployed Workers' Association is organising men and women for work. It was formed early this year, chiefly through the efforts of its Secretary, Jack Clarke, (whose articles have appeared in this paper), and later by a committee which he gathered around him. It is not tied to any political party but the Association has very definite views on how the unemployment problem should be tackled.

### Radical policy

Firstly, they have no confidence that private enterprise will do an about-turn and provide the necessary jobs. The IDA, with all the backing that 1400m of state money can provide, has admitted

that it cannot do that, under its present policy.

So the Unemployed Workers' Association looks to more radical measures than paying what is, in effect, outdoor relief to private businessmen to persuade them to keep people at work. The kind of statement that "jobs depend on investment"—investment depends on profits they dismiss as "idle chatter which workers are no longer prepared to accept".

Among the measures which they demand be taken, in order to get people back to work, are the nationalisation of the construction industry, the opening up of trade with countries outside the EEC, the nationalisation of the banks and release of our reserves, the suspension of payments on credits, the nationalisation of all mineral

resources, an end to the export capital and selective import control in the textile, footwear, clothing and electronics industries. It is a radical policy which displays a sharp insight into the wealth-creating aspects of economy—the mineral resource the vast investment capital presently locked up in the banks, the enormous job potential of a state socially-oriented construction industry.

In the short term, the Association is concerned with bettering present conditions of the unemployed, the degrading often uncomfortable, Labour Exchange miserable pittances paid people on the Dole, discrimination in this respect against women workers and a serious erosion of the value of Dole because of rocketing inflation